



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, May 2, 2008

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CHILD SMUGGLER SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR 27 MONTHS

TUCSON – Monica Rodriguez, 27, of Phoenix, Ariz., was sentenced here today to 27 months in prison by U.S. District Cindy K. Jorgenson. Rodriguez pleaded guilty on January 16, 2008 to Conspiracy to Transport an Illegal Alien for Profit and Failure to Appear.

Rodriguez attempted to enter the United States on July 25, 2007, at the Douglas, Ariz. Port of Entry in a commercial shuttle. Rodriguez was traveling with two boys, ages 3 and 13. Rodriguez told the United States Customs and Border Protection Officer that the boys were her sons and presented her own sons' Arizona birth certificates on their behalf. The Officer became suspicious after interviewing the children, and determined that the children were actually Mexican citizens with no authorization to be in the U.S. Rodriguez admitted she was not related to the boys and did not know their names. She was to be paid \$250 per boy by an unknown lady to cross the boys into the U.S. and take them to Border Mart in Douglas.

On July 26, 2007, Rodriguez was charged in federal court in Tucson, with Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain, an offense punishable by imprisonment for a term of five years or more, and appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Charles R. Pyle. The court released her from custody on her own recognizance, and ordered Rodriguez to appear in court for a preliminary hearing on July 30, 2007. Rodriguez willfully failed to appear for that hearing. She remained a fugitive until she was re-arrested by Customs and Border Protection Officers at the Nogales Port of Entry on December 28, 2007, as she re-entered the U.S.

The smuggled child was turned over to the custody of the Mexican Department of Family Services (the Mexican equivalent of U.S. Child Protective Services) and has been reunited with her family.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Douglas. The prosecution was handled by Mary Sue Feldmeier, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-07-1493-TUC-CKJ
RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-104(Rodriguez)

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